The Blues of David Lynch

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THE BLUES OF DAVID LYNCH

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Résumé

Cette étude vise à élaborer une typologie du bleu dans les films en couleur de David Lynch jusqu'à *Mulholland Drive* (2001). La couleur bleue est examinée quand elle se fait lumière, matière ou discours. L'auteur analyse l'emploi, la fonction, la valeur et le sens de la lumière bleue, statique ou clignotante, ainsi que les objets bleus, afin de démontrer que Lynch s'approprie les connotations traditionnellement associées à cette couleur dans la culture occidentale, notamment dans le christianisme et dans la pensée romantique, par ses compositions cinématographiques, aussi bien au niveau des récits et des structures narratives qu'au niveau métafictionnel, les films représentant l'effet produit sur chaque spectateur comme une forme de nostalgie, i.e. le "*blues*."

This paper is an attempt to give a typology of the color blue in the color films of David Lynch up to and including *Mulholland Drive* (2001). The color blue will be considered alternately as light, matter or verbal language (the word "blue"); blues as music will be evoked but not examined thoroughly, while the blues as may be suggested through an actor's body language will only be dealt with when it is directly related to the color. Will, then, be studied the use, function, value and meaning of blue lighting, divided into static light and flashing light, which will itself be subdivided into lightning and rippling light, and finally the blue objects in *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Mulholland Drive*. My hypothesis is that the common denominator to the color blue in Lynch's films is, in fact, the blues – blue would, then, refer to something missing that upsets the subject emotionally – and I will attempt to demonstrate that this has bearing not only on the films' narratives and narrative structures, but also at a metafictional level and in the way the films represent the individual spectator's response as a form of blues.

The flashing blue light of otherwordly intervention or imagination: metafiction and artistic creation

"[B]lue denotes things celestial," William Gass says in *On Being Blue* (Gass, 56). Ever since Lynch's first color film, flashing blue light, resembling lightning or electricity, has been associated with the divine or the supernatural. In *Dune* (1984) the giant worms the Fremen worship are announced by worm signs – bluish lightning and electricity [78:45]. In *Wild at Heart* (1990), *Fire Walk With Me* (1992) and *Lost Highway* (1996) the appearance of supernatural beings who intervene in the world of men is also heralded by flashing blue light. The Good Witch appears in a pink bubble on a backdrop of blinking blue sky when she advises Sailor Ripley not to "turn [his] back on love" [112:40]. Blue lightning flashes when blue-jean-clad Bob climbs into Laura Palmer's room to rape her [100:00], and Leland Palmer says of The One-Armed Man, another inhabitant of the Red Room, that he came "out of the blue" [84:40] after the latter tried to warn Laura that her father is her tormentor [84:10]. In *Lost Highway* the Mystery Man's appearing to Fred outside the cabin [47:30] and later in the red Mustang [112:25] are associated with blue lightning, but, interestingly enough, this is not the case in the other Mystery Man scenes which take place indoors around other characters, e.g. when Fred meets him at Andy's [27:50] or when Pete talks to him on the phone after talking to Mr. Eddie [95:10].

This association of blue light with the appearance of the divine in the human world is not particularly original and is in keeping with traditional Christian imagery, notably of the Virgin Mary, from the XIIth century onward, though blue was already used to signify the presence or the intervention of the divine in miniatures produced in the 9th century Carolingian Empire (Pastoureau, 41-2). But Lynch's deities, particularly in *Twin Peaks* and *Fire Walk With Me*, are more reminiscent of Greek mythology: they intervene in the life of humans, but their intervention is never direct – they just appear to advise or possess the human characters; they take on human form and may even have been humans and, in *Twin Peaks* at least, are all gathered together in their own Mount Olympus, the Black Lodge or the Red Room in the feature film, whether they are good, evil or ambivalent. This suggests that blue is not morally connoted and accompanies both positive and harmful forces. Moreover, these deities may also be mere representations of the character's conscience (the Good Witch tells Sailor not to "turn [his] back on love") or unconscious (the Mystery Man tells Fred that Alice and Renee are the same person [113:25], which would explain the absence of lightning when Fred is not alone). In *Fire Walk With Me*, The One-Armed Man represents both Leland's wish to protect his daughter from himself (from Bob) [116:45] and Laura's inner knowledge that her father is the one who has been having her all along.

These divine forces hardly appear, then, as "authentic" representations of the divine or the supernatural – this is clearly suggested in *Wild at Heart* when flashing blue light shows Lula's deranged cousin Del fighting against the black gloves he believes belong to the alien tormenting him [43:20]. Instead, the divine blue of Christian iconography is directly associated with the Romantic *topos* of blue as "the color of dreams, or at least of the invitation to dream" (Pastoureau 166, my translation), as if the invitation to dream were a promise of divine intervention. In *Wild at Heart* Sailor sees the Good Witch after getting knocked out; in *Fire Walk With Me* Laura is in a semi-conscious state when Bob enters her room; in *Lost Highway* Fred is very likely "deranged," as the David Bowie song which opens and closes the film suggests; and in *Mulholland Drive* Diane has seemingly been recalling past events before Irene and her companion penetrate her house and she commits suicide [134:05].

This association of the imagination and the supernatural is obviously related to Lynch's own vision of the creative act. In "The Death of the Subject" I drew a parallel between Lynch and the post-romantic poet Ted Hughes who also compared seeking inspiration to fishing, attributing inspiration to an otherworldly source (Roche, EREA, 51). Lynch says the idea for "the Red Room scene leapt into [his] mind" (Rodley, 165), and the idea for the character Bob came to him when someone on the set of the pilot episode of *Twin Peaks* told actor Frank Silva, then working as the set dresser, not to lock himself "in the room." (Rodley, 163-4). For Lynch, ideas, like deities, come out of the blue. This is how he put it at the Cannes Press Conference for *Muholland Drive*: "Ideas, sometimes, come into the mind, and this drives me crazy. I don't know where they come from."[1] Blue, then, is also the color of the imagination, and in Lynch's films, the blue of divine intervention certainly represents the irrational, the ungraspable, or more precisely, the contingency of the imagination. That the flashing blue light of divine intervention is always arrhythmic, like lightning, not steady and predictable, may in effect be a *sign* of this contingency.

What is also very much specific to Lynch's films, is that, at a metafictional level, these supernatural forces seem to represent stand-ins for the director. In *Wild at Heart* the Good Witch's intervention, which, like the other references to *The Wizard of Oz*, has been added by Lynch, is a gimmick to alter the end of Barry Gifford's novel that ends with Sailor and Lula's parting (Hughes, 142). In *Fire Walk With Me*, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* the color blue also functions as the director's mark, often via the presence of stand-ins or self-referential figures (the Chalfont boy who looks like a young David

Lynch, the Mystery Man who is shown filming Fred at the end of the film [113:45], the diseased homeless, a reference to the diseased Man on the Planet who seems to set events in motion in *Eraserhead* (1977) [4:15]), and will clearly take on a structuring function that will be articulated around two types of blue light: one that resembles lightning and another that ripples like water. The beginning credits of *Fire Walk With Me* consist of a zoom-out on a watery blue haze that becomes more electric as it is shown to be a TV screen filled with bluish white noise [2:30]. Throughout the film, the bluish haze, coupled with the hiss of white noise, will be used to evoke or announce the proximity of the other world, e.g. when Philip Jeffries tells of his experience in the Red Room [27:45] or when the Chalfonts appear in the parking lot outside of Norma Jenning's diner, the RR, to warn Laura that "the man behind the mask is looking for" her diary [46:55]. But this blue haze also refers by metonymy to the film's origin, *Twin Peaks*, the TV series created by Lynch and Mark Frost, and thus to Lynch's re-working the source material; and it further recalls the wavering piece of blue velvet, also filmed in close-up, during the beginning credits of *Blue Velvet* [0:25].

In *Lost Highway*, blue lightning is directly associated with Fred Madison's transformation, which seems to be linked to the Mystery Man. These transformations structure the film's narrative, marking the junctions between the Fred/Renee and Pete/Alice stories, which is why the blue lightning also appears at four other key moments in the film: outside Pete's house when he experiences a troubled vision that recalls Fred's own [78:00]; during the love scene, shortly before Pete turns back into Fred [111:25]; inside the hallway of Andy's house, which turns into the hallway of the Lost Highway Hotel [102:35]; and in the hotel itself [116:45]. This blue lightning, which refers to Fred's probable crime and ensuing guilt – Guy Astic relates it to Fred's being sentenced to the electric chair (Astic, 41) – can be linked to another kind of blue, the watery blue light of Andy's swimming pool which, at the beginning of the film, plays over the bodies of his guests, many of which are naked women [26:15], and later on, over the ceiling and walls of the room where a screen shows Alice in a porn [98:10]. This watery (feminine?) light evokes the origin of the crime, Fred's jealousy and mistrust of Renee, as is made clear when Fred shows the proof of Dick Laurent's guilt – a porn film starring Renee – on a small, blue screen [119:25]. As in the opening credits of *Fire Walk With Me*, the watery blue light has made way to, and maybe even produced, the wrathful blue lightning that is obviously a very kitsch re-cycling of the use of lightning in old horror films. The opposite occurs in the Silencio scene in *Mulholland Drive*, when the blue lightning seemingly produced by Bondar the magician on stage, and which provokes fear in Betty and Diane, makes way for watery blue light, before Cookie

appears on stage to present Rebekah Del Rio [102:50], a name which evokes not only water, but also Diane Selwyn's hometown, Deep River, Ontario [126:50]. The same sequence of flashing blue light occurs at the end of the film when Irene and her companion appear to lead Diane to commit suicide in a storm of blue lightning, the rippling blue light of the Silencio appearing after her death [136:10]. The Silencio is thus designated as the point of origin of the watery blue light, which impossibly brings origin (Diane's hometown) and end (her death) together.

The structuring function of flashing blue light at both a narrative and a metafictional level is thus directly linked to Lynch's vision of the creative act. Both types of flashing blue light evoke the idea of an origin or a causality, even if these are not necessarily clearly pinpointed. If the rippling blue light obviously recalls water and maternal imagery, lightning or electric blue may refer to another biological causality: the electric activity in the sleeper's brain which produces dreams, as Dale Cooper tells Sheriff Truman in episode 3 of *Twin Peaks*: "Do you know where dreams come from? Acetylcholine neurons fire high, voltage impulses into the forebrain. The impulses become pictures, the pictures become your dream. But no one knows why we choose these particular pictures." [6:00] Analyzing this in the light of Clément Rosset's "tragic philosophy," which is based on the idea that nature is "a third state, that has nothing to do with the human (artifice) nor with matter (chance)" (Rosset, 11, my translation), and thus that there is no nature, I would conclude that flashing blue light is the artifice that marks the attempt to attribute a (divine, biological) nature to what is merely a matter of contingency.[2] That it is seen as an artifice by Lynch appears clear in his choosing to *stage* the uses of blue in the Silencio scene which, as we will see, refers to *Blue Velvet*, perhaps the origin of Lynch's treatment of blues.

The static blue light which halos the performer: the spectator's blues

A different kind of blue light, this one static and continuous, is used in most performance scenes, which often take place on stage. That Dorothy Vallens in *Blue Velvet* is introduced as "The Blue Lady" although she is not wearing a blue dress (but a black one) suggests that her stage name has nothing to do with her clothes but rather with what she represents and maybe produces as a performer. First, the two songs she is shown singing are "Blue Velvet" and "Blue Star." Second, she is always shown back-lit with blue light that taints her pale skin and haloes her head; the musicians are also lit in blue. In the first scene the focus is on her and on Jeffrey watching her [27:10], emphasized by a medium close-up of Jeffrey and Sandy, then a close-up of Jeffrey

alone; the zoom-in on Dorothy would reflect Jeffrey's fascination for her. In the second scene the focus is on her, then on Jeffrey who notices Frank's tearful *response* as he clings to his piece of blue velvet [57:05], first in a long shot, then in close-up; that the blue light emanating from the stage covers Frank suggests he is visibly affected by this blue performance. In the scene in *Fire Walk With Me* where Julee Cruise sings "Pictures in a World of Blue" at the Bang-Bang Bar, the focus also shifts from the singer, her pale skin and white dress lit in blue [67:15], to close-ups of specific members of the audience: Donna watching Laura Palmer's tearful *response* to the performance, although Laura finds herself lit exclusively by the red light that heralds her night-time life in the Pink Room and her burning up like the "tender bows of innocence" the Log Lady mentioned outside the club [66:25]. Laura's being lit in red alienates her from the performance, as if to suggest she no longer has access to the consoling blue.

The articulation between blue and red is central in these scenes. Michel Pastoureau explains that red and blue have become opposites in the Western world (Pastoureau, 83) and that red is the color of "luxury and sin"[3] (Pastoureau, 102). Red curtains hang at the back of the stage at the Slow Club, the Bang-Bang Bar and the Silencio where the seats are also red and some of the performers (Cocco, Rebekah Del Rio but not Bondar the magician) wear red clothes. Moreover, if blue announces the appearance of the divine in our world, the divine world itself is circumscribed by red curtains in *Fire Walk With Me* (the Red Room [121:20]). Red, then, appears as the material backdrop on which the experience of blue light takes place. If the curtains glow intensely at the Slow Club, they are shown to be lit from below by white light, while the blue light appears to come from above out of nowhere. At the Bang Bang Bar, the origin of both lights is invisible, though the red one is obviously produced by the back-lit curtains whereas the blue one comes directly from an off-camera spotlight. Red frames blue, in the same manner as curtains contain or rather draw a limit not between the stage and the audience, but between the audience and the stage, on the one hand, and the behind-the-scenes space where the performance is conceived. The red curtains conceal, then, the artifice of creation; hence, their presence in the supernatural world which, I have argued, serves to represent the contingency of the creative act.

Now I want to compare these two performance scenes (Dorothy at the Slow Club and Julie Cruise at the Bang-Bang Bar) to two other performance scenes where the focus seems to be more equally divided between the performer and the spectator and where, significantly, blue lighting is not used. I have in mind the scene in *Blue Velvet* where Ben Gow lip-synchs Roy Orbison's "Candy-Colored Clown," lighting himself from below (like a vampire in an old horror

film) with a lamp he uses in place of a microphone, and the scene in *Mulholland Drive* where Rebekah Del Rio lip-synchs her own Spanish version of Orbison's "Crying." What these two scenes, the latter obviously referring to the former through the idea of lip-synching an Orbison song, emphasize is the artificiality of re-presentations: both performances are fake and both performers are excessively made-up – Ben Gow looks like the very clown he's singing about [75:35], while Rebekah Del Rio has a tear drawn on her face [104:55]. However, these performances do move specific members of the audience (Frank Booth, Betty and Rita) in spite of their blatant, parodic artificiality.

The artificiality of the performance is also present in the Dorothy Vallens and Julie Cruise scenes, although it is less obvious: "Blue Velvet" makes way to "Blue Star" in a montage using strings when there are none on stage and no keyboard, and one can point out that Julie Cruise's backing vocals are not justified diegetically. What I want to insist on, then, is that, even in the Ben Gow and Rebekah Del Rio scenes which seem, at least when they start, to focus more on the performer than on the spectator, the emotional experience does not seem to be so much the performer's as the spectator's in the sense that the performer is offering a representation of emotion, whereas whatever it triggers in the spectator seems authentic – the Rebekah Del Rio scene is particularly potent in that it is only when she collapses on stage and her voice goes on singing that one realizes she is mimicking her own previously recorded representation of pain; both performances are thus dissociated and what we were given to see is a re-re-representation coupled with a re-representation as the song is a cover. Moreover, in most of these performance scenes, the performer appears to be completely unaware of the effect he or she is having on the audience – Ben Gow notices Frank's distress quite late and, interestingly enough, stops singing before the latter turns the music off [76:55].

Performers would be, then, unwitting vessels of the emotional effect of their re-presentation. At a metafictional level, they function as messengers who, like Lynch's deities, communicate, though unknowingly, a message to the main characters. Indeed, it is not only the mood of the song but also its lyrics that relate to the specific spectator who is emotionally involved with the performance. For Frank Booth, the blue velvet fetichist, Dorothy's performance has a personal ring to it, and one can deduce that the same is true when he grimaces in pain to Ben's: "In dreams you're mine all the time." [76:50] Rebekah Del Rio's "Llorando" has the effect of an incantation, making both Rita and Betty cry [106:30], and in the *Fire Walk With Me* scene, Laura practically cries on cue when Julie Cruise, shot in an extreme close-up, sings: "How can a heart that's filled with love start to cry" [68:30], lyrics written by Lynch himself. These representations of

representations insist, then, on the idea that the performance resonates in a personal manner for a specific member of the audience and may thus not affect another. This implies that the spectator's response is not only a question of the artist's artifice, but also a question of chance: at a diegetic level, it is chance that has Laura step in right when Julie Cruise sings a song that seems to be addressed to her, and it is chance that brings Rita and Betty to the Silencio. At a metafictional level, it is quite obviously sheer artifice.

I said above that blue light is not morally connoted and I pointed out that the use of the different types of flashing blue light is certainly affectively connoted in *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*. My feeling is that these spectators' tearful responses to these performances are, in fact, the *blues*, which designates "melancholy, nostalgia" (Pastoureau, 141). For what the lyrics to all of these songs evoke is the idea that something believed to have once been accessible is now missing: "I can still see blue velvet through my tears" suggests that he/she who wore blue velvet is no more; "In dreams you're mine all the time" implies that in reality you are not mine all the time; in "Questions in a World of Blue," Julie Cruise enumerates a series of questions that have no answer; and the chorus to Orbison's "Crying" is "crying over you," hence, over you who are gone. None of these songs are blues songs *per se* – none use the flatted third, fifth and seventh of the associated major scale, the "blue" notes (Ewen, 143) – although their lyrics are somewhat bluesy, and it seems to me that this once again serves to underline the distance between the performance and the spectator's response to it. Indeed, I will defend this point using a counter-example. The only performance in a Lynch film which appears not to affect the spectators, even though it is a blues song and it does reflect their plight (Lula's father died in a fire and the past is threatening the younger lovers, Sailor and Lula), is Koko Taylor's rendering of "Up in Flames" in *Wild at Heart*. Her blues hardly catches Sailor's and Lula's attention and functions, then, as an instance of dramatic irony; that her performance does not stand out like the others mentioned above is visually rendered by the fact that, not only is she enveloped in blue light, but she is wearing a blue sequined dress on a backdrop of blue curtains.

Blue objects: mystery, transitional phenomena and lack

In *Mulholland Drive* it is after Rebekah Del Rio's performance at the Silencio that Betty finds a blue cube in her purse [107:40]; back at Aunt Ruth's, Rita will insert the blue key found in her purse earlier on [109:50]. This mechanism seems to trigger the Diane Selwyn/Camilla Rhodes part of the film, as if this second story were the solution to the mystery of the blue key, as if this story were contained in the blue box.[4] The blue box appears, then, as a synecdoche for the film's Chinese box structure. Like the Silencio, the blue cube has a structuring effect: it is the forces (represented by Irene and her companion) released from the blue box that bring about Diane Selwyn's death, and thus the film's conclusion [132:40]. The Diane/Camilla part of the film also has a blue key, but whatever it opens remains unknown: it is merely the sign that Camilla has been murdered by Diane's hired man [131:50]. There is thus a reversal between both parts of the film, as what represented a mystery (the first blue key) in the first part represents the solution to a mystery (the second key) in the second one. Clearly, the mirroring effect is flawed, if only because the two keys are of a different shape, but what mirroring effect there is relies on one sign: the blue which is exactly the same and which, I would argue, is also a sign of mystery. Moreover, at a metafictional level, the blue box signals the director's sewing an end onto what was meant to be the pilot of a TV series which ABC abandoned (Chion, 259); this strengthens the idea that it is a synecdoche of the film.

This relation of contiguity between a blue object and Lynch's film in *Fire Walk with Me* where the blue rose [6:55], a Romantic *topos* very likely borrowed from Novalis (Pastoureau, 138), is the only part of the code Gordon Cole (played by David Lynch) uses to communicate with Chet Desmond, a sign that, unlike those which Lil wears on her red dress, cannot be clearly put into words for it refers to the unsolved mystery of the Red Room. The metafictional dimension is blatant here, Lynch's appearance suggesting that his own film is a "surprise" [4:50], a "code"[5] and a game for the TV series fan – Chet Desmond — a mystery for whose who aren't in the know – Sam Stanley – but that there still remain shadowy areas even for the most diehard of fans.

The relation of contiguity, between the blue object and the film which contains it, is quite literal in *Blue Velvet*, where it is both a synecdoche and a metonymy. This structuring effect is reinforced by the blue velvet fabric that ripples like water or curtains in the wind during the beginning and end credits, providing a frame for the diegesis. The film's title refers not only to the source of Lynch's inspiration, the Bobby Vinton song (Rodley, 134), but also to Frank Booth's fetish which, I will argue, also ties in to the idea of an origin. There are two recurring blue objects in this film which also have a metonymical relationship: Dorothy's blue velvet dress and the piece of blue velvet Frank keeps for himself and which is supposed to have been cut off from Dorothy's dress (Hughes, 88). Dorothy wears this dress three times in the film. The first and third time, she wears it on Frank's orders. It is a costume that envelops the naked body of the woman she interprets: Frank Booth's mother. In other words, the dress,

which is nothing more than fabric, matter, as the title underlines, is the sign of the artificiality of her performance, a performance which is meant to satisfy Frank's nostalgic desire to recover his mother in a perverted version of the Oedipus triangle where he does not seem to know whether he wants to be the father or the baby. Again, it is a question of projecting a nature onto something that is mere chance (a body, a piece of fabric) and artifice (a performance). The only other time Dorothy wears the blue velvet robe is when Jeffrey comes to visit her the day after having snuck into her apartment. When Jeffrey comes in, Dorothy tells him: "I looked for you in my closet tonight. It's crazy, I know. I don't know where you come from [...]" [56:10]. In other words, it seems that her wearing the blue velvet robe is an attempt to make her "special friend" reappear, thus, like Frank, to make the past present again. This may explain why she no longer needs to wear the robe when she knows he will return, e.g. on his third visit when Jeffrey is, by the way, accompanied by the Bobby Vinton song [63:55].

As for the piece of blue velvet Frank carries with him, it is a fetish that recalls what D. W. Winnicott calls a "transitional object," usually a soft object, an interface that connects the baby to the mother; "[t]he transitional object stands for the breast, or the object of the first relationship" (Winnicott, 7). At first, "[t]he mother [...] affords the infant the opportunity for the illusion that her breast is part of the infant. It is, as it were, under the baby's magical control." (Winnicott, 15) The baby retains a sense of "omnipotence," but the object is located "at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being (in the baby's mind) merged in with the infant and alternatively being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than conceived of. The use of an object symbolizes the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness." (Winnicott, 130) Resorting to a transitional object is thus a normal behavior for a baby, but "[t]he transitional object may eventually develop into a fetish object and so persist as a characteristic of the adult sexual life" (Winnicott, 12), becoming, then, a perversion; this is very clear in Frank's taking on the role of the father (perversion) and the baby (transitional object).[6] The transitional object's "fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. [...] It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning" (Winnicott, 7). This is clearly not the case for Frank Booth, who sees the blue velvet as the object that can re-connect him to the mother, like the umbilical cord, and reinvest him with a sense of omnipotence. The piece of blue velvet he carries thus represents Frank's disconnectedness to the world and the (m)other. Indeed, when he imposes his authority on someone

(Dorothy) or murders him (Don), he connects himself to this other with the piece of blue velvet that he places in his mouth and in the other's; he can only connect to the other through violence, which is his way of asserting his feeling of impotence. The blue velvet refers to a missing, irrecoverable situation which is Frank the baby's omnipotent relationship to his mother. That it refers to an origin, for Frank, is deconstructed by its being not an original transitional object but a copy: it has been cut off from the dress of the surrogate mother. The blue velvet refers to an inaccessible origin, just as the song that inspired the film and gave it its title evokes nostalgia for 50s America and, biographically, for Lynch's happy childhood.

Playing with the blues

I have attempted to differentiate some of the different types of blues and their meaning and/or function in the color films of David Lynch: the flashing blue light that signals divine intervention and that I see as a metaphor for the contingency of the creative act, often related to dream states; the static blue light that washes over the performer and seems to reflect the individual spectator's response rather than the performer's own emotions which other blueless scenes show to be fake; the blue cube and blue velvet which are both synecdoches of the film that refer to an origin (the film's but also the character's mysterious origin, Rita's identity and Frank's mother). These different blues do, of course, interplay. In the Silencio scene in *Mulholland Drive* blue lightning makes way for watery blue light and the scene ends with Betty's finding the blue cube in her purse. The sequence of events suggests that the blue cube has been produced by the blue light, but at the end of the film, the blue light seems, on the contrary, to be released from the blue cube, along with Irene and her companion. I see this paradox as reflecting Lynch's conception of art: if the blue object is a synecdoche for the film, the blue light not only refers to the film's origin in the artist's mind, but also vehicles the emotional effect the film will have on the spectator, both being a question of contingency. The distinction between the material and the celestial represented by light is, then, a mere artifice and more precisely a stereotype. Indeed, I want to stress, once again, that the meanings attached to the various blues are not original but are in fact *topoi* of Western culture, notably Christian and Romantic imagery; it is the use Lynch makes of these blues that is original and personal, as we have seen, which explains why a study of the blues, and of colors in general, in Lynch's films is inevitably metafictional. For what all the blues have in common is that they are the artifice by which Lynch represents the absence of an origin, that is to say the contingency of matter and the mystery of chance. Lynch's choosing

to represent artistic inspiration as divine intervention is, perhaps, an attempt to attribute an origin to the ideas that come out of the blue, and expresses a certain nostalgia for a world that makes sense, for a world that is not mere chance.

Notes

1. The Cannes Press Conference is a feature of the French Studio Canal DVD of *Mulholland Drive*.

2. This is a thesis that I have more thoroughly defended in *L'Imagination malsaine*.

3. Like the color blue, the color red evokes several meanings (desire, sexuality, sin, crime) in Lynch's films, meanings that might seem, by the way, more conventional than those associated with the color blue. Lynch's originality lies, first, in the fact that the relationship between red and blue does not correspond to a good/evil or reason/passion dichotomy. In *Fire Walk with Me* red light is dominant in the Pink Room [76:50], a place of vice where Laura sells herself to strangers, but red light is also the color associated with Sailor and Lula's passionate lovemaking in *Wild at Heart* [7: 25, 40:20].

4. Readings of *Mulholland Drive* such as Pascal Couté's do indeed see the second part as being the key to the first.

5. In a scene that was edited out, Chet Desmond tells Sam Stanley that Gordon Cole "loves his code."

6. Even Frank's taste for Pabst Blue Ribbon beer becomes symbolic of his ambivalent position as father and baby. The name of the beer evokes of course his transitional object-fetish. But in the film, beer is explicitly associated to the father figure when Jeffrey approves of Detective Williams who drinks Budweiser, "the king of beers" [26:55],and Frank himself reprimands Jeffrey for drinking Heineken [70:30].

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